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RHMFISS/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
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SECDEF FOR FATA, CAGAN AND BEIN, DEPT FOR EUR (DICARLO), D (SMITH), P (BAME), EUR/SCE (HOH, SAINZ, FOOKS), AND EUR/RPM (BROTZEN), NSC FOR BRAUN, USNIC FOR WIGHTMAN AND MCLANE, USNATO FOR REID, UNDERWOOD, SHAFFER

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [BK](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: BOSNIA: NEW MINISTER OF DEFENSE TO ATTEND COALITION CONFERENCE; BOSNIAN IED CAPABILITIES

REF: STATE 54923

Classified By: AMBASSADOR DOUGLAS MCELHANEY FOR REASONS 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (SBU) Newly-installed Bosnian Minister of Defense Selmo Cikotic, along with Deputy Defense Minister Igor Crnadak and Deputy Commander of the Armed Forces' Operational Command BG Mirko Tepsic, will attend the Coalition Conference in Tampa, Florida April 30-May 2. Cikotic, who assumed his duties this week, will be making his first overseas trip as Minister.

¶2. (S) Before Cikotic and Crnadak departed for the United States, we briefed them on proposals to expand the scope of duty of Bosnia's Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) unit currently serving in Iraq. We explained that some serious consideration was given to training subsequent rotations of the EOD unit to engage in counter-Improvised Explosive Device (IED) activities.

¶3. (S) Both Cikotic and Crnadak expressed their broad support in principle for increasing the capabilities and responsibilities of the EOD unit. Cikotic noted that Bosnia should be expected to take on greater responsibilities in peace support operations as a means to demonstrate its commitment to NATO and global security. Cikotic said that one of his primary goals as Minister would be to expand Bosnia's capacity to engage in such missions. For his part, Crnadak said that in his role as Deputy Minister for Policy and Plans, he had asked the Joint Chiefs to prepare detailed development and training plans for niche capable units that could eventually be used for future peace support operations.

¶4. (S) Cikotic and Crnadak also hinted that any impediments to the EOD unit assuming counter-IED capabilities were political rather than logistical and that any such requests must therefore be handled in a "prudent" manner. For his part, Crnadak said that he suspected certain political leaders would view the EOD unit's assumption of counter-IED operations as a "substantive change of mission" thereby necessitating the deployment's re-approval by the Presidency and Parliament. We stressed that the EOD unit would not change in composition and would engage in similar work, which presents a legal rationale for avoiding a potentially contentious Presidency and Parliament debate on the mission.

Cikotic and Crnadak also inquired as to the nature and location of counter-IED training, and said that it would be preferable for many reasons to undertake the training activities in Bosnia.

15. (S) Comment. Cikotic's participation at the Coalition Conference illustrates that the Ministry of Defense views the Iraq deployment as one its highest policy priorities. Though new to their positions, both Cikotic and Crnadak are well-briefed on the deployment issues and will be engaged and knowledgeable interlocutors at the conference. Our initial conversations with both men indicate that they support expanding future Bosnian contributions to peace support operations worldwide. The realization of expanded deployments will depend on support from Bosnia's political leaders, a prospect that is far less certain. We will continue to highlight that assuming counter-IED capabilities does not mean a changed mission for the EOD unit, which could prove successful in heading-off a larger political debate. End comment.

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